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"one of the best and most estimable girls in Bonn," he returns to the subject of the variations. "They will be," he says, "somewhat difficult to play, especially the quavers in the coda. Let not that frighten you. I have so managed it, that you need not play anything more than the quavers; the other notes may be left out, since they are in the violin part. I should never have done anything of the kind, had I not observed that there were some persons in Vienna who, after hearing me extemporize a fantasia in the evening, would, on the morrow, note down some of my peculiarities, and pass them off as their own. So, as I foresaw that these plagiarisms would soon appear in print, I resolved to be beforehand with them. I had also another motive, namely, to puzzle the pianoforte professors here, many of whom are my deadly enemies, and I was not unwilling to take this revenge, because I foresaw that these variations when, from time to time, placed before them, would cause these gentlemen to make but a sorry appearance." In a subsequent letter he describes the feelings with which he had received a gift from this lady. "Acceptable as was the present, it awakened feelings of melancholy. It recalled former days, and made me ashamed of myself when I thought of your generous behaviour. In truth I did not believe that you still deemed me worthy of a place in your memory. Oh! could you have been a witness of what I felt yesterday, you would certainly not think it exaggeration, when I declare to you that the thought of you made me sad even to tears. I entreat you to believe that, however little I may appear to you to deserve belief, I have suffered, and still suffer, through the loss of your friendship. You and your dear mother I can never forget. You were so kind to me that such a loss is not to be soon compensated. I know what I lost. I know what you were, but . . . Ah! were I to fill up the blank, I should be obliged to revert to scenes which to you it would be unpleasant to contemplate, and to me painful to recall." After these touching allusions to agreeable associations of which he was no longer a partaker, he refers to a composition of his own by which the letter was accompanied, and towards the conclusion makes mention of an intimacy he had contracted with a kindred spirit whose kindly offices and friendly intercourse he retained during the remainder of his days.

(To be continued.)

## THE HANDEL FESTIVAL.

By HENRY C. LUNN.

WHATEVER may be said of the adaptability of the Crystal Palace for the purposes of music, there can be no question that it has earned for itself a name for the presentation of the greatest works of Handel, which will cling to it for many years to come. The triennial gathering at this Summer Palace for the glorification of England's great oratorio composer, has become one of the institutions of the country; and even if critics should persistently assert that a large portion of the audience is attracted rather by the sight than the sound, the promoters of this gigantic undertaking may reasonably pride themselves upon being able to organize a Festival, in which the devotees of fashion shall be willingly taxed for the support of the devotees of art. And indeed there is much to be said for those who merely form part of this vast assemblage for the sake of seeing and being seen; for not only is the effect most beautiful when the sun lights up the variegated colours of the dresses in the audience part, but the orchestra, with its

four thousand vocalists and instrumentalists, is a sight to dwell upon with wonder and admiration, and to treasure up as a noble example of the perfection to which power can be subdued and controlled.

When we assert that the combined effect of band and chorus was far superior, in the Festival just concluded, to that in any one yet given in the Crystal Palace, every credit should be awarded to the energetic manager, Mr. Bowley, for it is to him that we are indebted for the idea of screening in the transept; a plan which, however disappointing to the many persons who relied upon catching the sound as it wandered through the building, was most gratefully accepted by those who had secured seats within a reasonable distance of the orchestra. And our remarks should have additional weight when it is considered that the place appropriated to the "press" was in a gallery, the centre of which was occupied by the back of the Royal box, and the sides of which were "reserved," and carefully guarded by policemen; so that those who came to write upon the performance, were compelled to secure one of the few available front seats two hours and a half before the performance began, or to stand at the back, in mute wonder at the immense number of ladies engaged in writing the musical notices for the public press.

The rehearsal on Friday, the 12th ult., was attended by an enormous audience; and although Mr. Costa, by occasionally repeating a portion of the music, did not ignore the fact of its being a rehearsal, it had all the effect of a performance, so perfectly were all the pieces given. The Festival commenced on the following Monday with the *Messiah*, preceded, according to custom, by the National Anthem. Where all must be praise, and the work to be criticised is one so dear to all who listen to, or read upon, the marvellous manner in which our Christian faith has been embodied in music, little new can be added to the many records of the performances of the *Messiah* in our former pages. The principal vocalists were Madlle. Titiens, Madame Sainton-Dolby, Madame Rudersdorff, Mr. Sims Reeves, and Mr. Santley. To commence with the choruses, the great feature at this Festival, it would be impossible to conceive anything finer than the quality of tone in the first grand choral demonstration, "And the glory of the Lord," the phrases in which were answered by the separate divisions of the choir, with an union of decision and power rarely attained by so large a body of vocalists. The two great choruses, "For unto us," and the "Hallelujah," produced more than the usual amount of effect, the latter especially being remarkable for a due observance of *crescendo* and *diminuendo*, too often, even in good choirs, mistaken for *forte* and *piano*. The same may be said of "All we, like sheep," and the final chorus, "Worthy is the Lamb," both of which were as much under the control of Mr. Costa's *bâton*, as if four hundred, instead of four thousand, performers had been engaged in its interpretation. We do not agree with the traditions which justify either the many omissions in this Oratorio, or the tampering with the solos, notable examples of which are the transferring of the bass air, "But who may abide the day of his coming" to a contralto, and the division of "He shall feed his flock" (intended by Handel to be sung by a soprano) into a meaningless one-verse display of tenderness of expression, for soprano and contralto. To those, however, who place the vocalists before the composer, Madame Sainton-Dolby as the contralto, and Madlle. Titiens as the soprano, must have been everything that could be desired. Madame Dolby's delivery of "He was despised," was also a thoroughly artistic rendering of this deeply pathetic air. Madlle. Titiens proved herself fully equal to the subdued religious sentiment of "I know that my Redeemer liveth," and the more florid, "Rejoice greatly," both of which were given in her very best style. Madame Rudersdorff sang the air, "How beautiful are the feet," with much feeling; and (with Mr. W. H. Cummings), was of the utmost service in the quartet, with chorus, "Since by man came death." Mr. Sims Reeves sang, as only he can sing, the quiet and

consoling "Comfort ye my people," and the following air, "Every valley." In "Thy rebuke," "But thou didst not leave," and "Thou shalt break them," the contrast of styles is so remarkable, as to tax severely the powers of the most accomplished vocalist; and that Mr. Reeves is equally great in all these, is an undeniable proof that his intellectual conception of the music is as attractive to the listener, as his exceptional vocal power. Mr. Santley sang with most impressive emphasis the wonderfully descriptive air, "The people that walked in darkness;" and his fine voice and style were admirably displayed in "Why do the nations," and "The trumpet shall sound," in the latter of which the extraordinary trumpet *obbligato* of Mr. T. Harper, was a conspicuous feature. The orchestra played throughout the Oratorio to absolute perfection, especially surrounding the exquisite little "Pastoral Symphony," with an interest which we have seldom seen awakened at any former performance of the *Messiah*.

On the second day (Wednesday) the attractive "selection" drew a larger audience than did the *Messiah*, a fact which may perhaps partly be accounted for by the names of so many well-known solo singers appearing in the programme. The vocal selection from *Saul* comprised the fine chorus, "How excellent Thy name," the semi-chorus, "Along the monster atheist strode" (preceded by the short soprano solo, "An infant raised," sung by Madame Lemmens-Sherrington), the brief choral movement, "The youth inspired," leading to the bold and finely written chorus (opening in strict canon) "Our fainting courage," the repetition of the chorus "How excellent Thy name," the grand "Hallelujah," and the well-known chorus, "Envy, eldest born of Hell," which may be cited as one of the noblest instances of what may be effected by a great master upon a simple descending diatonic scale, constantly repeated, technically called a "ground bass." All these pieces were highly interesting; and the "Dead March," played with a solemnity which we have never heard equalled, formed a fitting climax to the extracts from this fine, but too little known, Oratorio. Madlle. Nilsson was received with the utmost enthusiasm in the air, "From mighty Kings," which she surrounded with all Handel's embellishments, and some few of her own; and then Mr. Santley gave "O voi dell' Erebo," a song from an early Oratorio of Handel's, called *La Resurrezione*, which is so fine and dramatic a composition, as to lead us to hope that we may shortly hear it again. Madlle. Nilsson's delivery of the air from *Judas*, "Wise men flattering," was somewhat better than the composition deserved; but ample compensation was made for the introduction of this song by Mr. Reeves' noble interpretation of "Deeper and deeper still," and the following air, "Waft her, angels," in which he once more asserted his right to be considered as the finest Handelian singer living. The first part terminated with the chorus from *Theodora*, "He saw the lovely youth," a grand composition which, like many other of this great master's works, is too rarely heard. The overture to the *Occasional Oratorio*, which commenced the second part, gave the orchestra an opportunity of proving their real power, apart from the vocalists, and the result was, as might be expected, an absolute triumph; the "Adagio," with its oboe solo (beautifully played by M. Barret), and the fine march at the conclusion displaying the exquisite balance of tone to perfection. The chorus from *Solomon*, "May no rash intruder" (usually called the "Nightingale Chorus") was excellently given; and the specimen from Handel's Opera, *Rinaldo*, "Lascia ch' io pianga," (beautifully sung by Madlle. Titiens) proved that the names of these operas will be constantly kept before the public by means of these detached trifles, although the bulk of the music may sink into utter oblivion. Of Mr. Santley's delivery of the song of Polypheme, "O ruddier than the cherry" (*Aëis* and *Galatea*), it is only necessary to say that he sang it in his usual style, and was enthusiastically encored. We should be glad to hear so great

an artist dispense with the high G at the conclusion, and sing the song as Handel wrote it. It may be argued that this partly produces the encore; but as we neither desire the high G nor the encore, we adhere to our opinion, and wait patiently for better days. Mr. W. H. Cummings deserves the thanks of every Handel lover, both for reviving the air, "Where'er you walk" (which, with the following chorus, "Now love, that everlasting boy" is from the almost forgotten *Serenata Semele*), and singing it so perfectly as he did on this occasion. The Duet, "O lovely peace," well rendered by Madlle. Nilsson and Madame Sain-ton-Dolby, and the twaddling song (with the "twiddling" flute *obbligato*) "Sweet bird," from *L'Allegro*, effectively warbled by voice and instrument (the former by Madame Lemmens-Sherrington, and the latter by Mr. Radcliffe), were succeeded by the chorus from *Alexander's Feast*, "The many rend the skies," one of the most perfect examples of Handel's massive choral writing to be found in any of his secular works. The third part opened with the grand double chorus "Immortal Lord," from *Deborah*. This was followed by "Pious orgies," sung by Madlle. Titiens as purely as Handel wrote it; and then came "Sound an alarm," given by Mr. Sims Reeves with all the declamatory power he has so often displayed in this fine martial appeal, succeeded by the chorus "We hear," which, it is scarcely necessary to say, was sung with thrilling effect. Madame Dolby then gave "What, though I trace" in a subdued style, thoroughly in accordance with the composer's meaning; after which, "Let the bright Seraphim," was sung by Madlle. Carola, the trumpet *obbligato* of Mr. Harper being played so exquisitely in tune, as to form an unfortunate comment upon many of the vocal passages. The choral selection from *Solomon*, which followed, comprised the double chorus "From the censor," succeeded by "Music, spread thy voice around," the highly dramatic "Shake the dome" (the effect of which was scarcely equalled by any choral work throughout the entire performance), "Draw the tear from hopeless love" (a chorus full of true pathos), and "Thus rolling surges rise," a most wonderful specimen of real "word-painting," which would beat Herr Wagner on his own ground. The somewhat thankless contralto solos which connect these choral pieces, were well given by Madame Sain-ton-Dolby. Miss Kellogg then sang the air from *Joshua*, "O had I Juba's lyre" with unaffected expression, and was received with much applause, considering that the programme had already extended to a most inordinate length. The trio and chorus, "See, the conquering hero comes" (solo vocalists, Madlle. Titiens, Madlle. Carola, and Madame Sain-ton-Dolby), formed a magnificent climax to the "selection" day; the wonderful tone of voices and instruments, in combination, producing such an extraordinary effect as to keep most of the audience in their seats until the final note.

On the third day (Friday) the great choral Oratorio, *Israel in Egypt*, was given so magnificently, as to eclipse any former performance of the work, even at a Handel Festival. The overture to the *Occasional Oratorio*, was finely played as a prelude; and the march was repeated, in deference to an encore, too unanimous to be resisted. After the introductory recitative, "Now there arose a new king," well delivered by Mr. Cummings, the plaintive chorus of the Israelites, "And the children sighed," was given with a pathos seldom heard in a large choir, and especially in a double chorus of such proportion. "They loathed to drink," a fugal chorus, based on a subject which the peculiar descent of sevenths, renders by no means attractive (another intentional piece of "word-painting") was also given with extraordinary accuracy. "He spake the word," and the "Hailstone Chorus" were perfect triumphs for the choir; so powerfully descriptive indeed were these grand musical illustrations of the plagues sent upon Egypt, that the effect upon the audience was almost indescribable, and the "Hailstone Chorus" was re-demanded as with one voice. No less remarkable as

intellectual renderings of this extraordinary chain of choral pieces were, "He sent a thick darkness," "He smote all the first-born," and, "But as for his people," in which the gradations of tone were observed to perfection. "He rebuked the Red Sea," "He led them through the deep," and the terribly real "But the waters overwhelmed their enemies," were the next pieces in the first part which deserve special commendation. We must not omit to mention that the air "Their land brought forth frogs" (with its skipping frog-like violin part) was carefully sung by Madame Sainton-Dolby. In the second part, after the opening chorus, "Moses and the children of Israel," the duet, "The Lord is my strength," was better sung by Madlle. Titiens and Madame Rudersdorff, than its merits entitle it to. Then, after the fine chorus, "And I will exalt Him," came the show duet (in our opinion not only unworthy of the work, but of the composer) "The Lord is a man of war," sung by Mr. Santley and Signor Foli, and encored, according to custom. From the choruses which followed, "Thou sentest forth" for double choir, may be selected for particular mention, every phrase being sung with remarkable energy and decision. Mr. Sims Reeves' singing of "The enemy said," is too well known to need additional eulogy; and we need only record that he gave it on this occasion with extraordinary effect, and was, as might be expected, immediately called upon to repeat it. Madlle. Titiens' delivery of the following air, "Thou didst blow," and Madame Sainton-Dolby and Mr. Cummings' singing of the duet, "Thou in thy mercy," were thoroughly satisfactory, although both compositions are scarcely worthy of a place in so great a work. The same may be said of the air, "Thou shalt bring them in," which was well given by Madame Sainton-Dolby. Madlle. Titiens declaimed magnificently the few bars of solo which usher in the final chorus "Sing ye to the Lord," the clear and ringing quality of her voice making these notes of triumph tell with thrilling effect. As the Festival commenced, so it ended, with the National Anthem; and at the end Mr. Costa received an ovation not one bit more hearty than he deserved, when we consider how much the effect of the performances, during the three days we have described, was owing to his untiring zeal and talent.

And now that we have borne willing testimony to the brilliant success of this Festival, we would suggest that it should be duly considered whether, on a future occasion, it might not be desirable to admit the fact that other oratorio composers have arisen since the time of Handel, who are entitled at least to a share in the honours of so extensive a musical demonstration. If Birmingham, Norwich, and the Three Choir Festivals, whilst fully acknowledging the genius of Handel, can also devote a large portion of their programmes to the works of the more modern composers, why should London so pertinaciously refuse them a hearing? A Handel Festival, emanating as it did from the Sacred Harmonic Society, under the excellent direction of Mr. Costa, at once appealed to all classes with irresistible force; and the result, as might be anticipated, was a decisive success; but it becomes a great question whether a "triennial" Handel Festival is not of too exclusive a character to take a permanent hold of the music-loving public of England. The experiment of a great Metropolitan Festival has so fully answered the expectations of its promoters, that it may reasonably be received as a definite sign that once in three years, at least, such an appeal will be liberally responded to; but because it began as a Handel Festival, there is no reason that it should end there. Mendelssohn, Spohr, and others who might be mentioned, are waiting for a hearing; and indeed we see no reason why a great musical demonstration like this should be confined almost entirely to sacred music: the many noble compositions which could be efficiently presented on such an occasion, would offer a powerful attraction, and induce a constant interest in this periodical Festival, which can scarcely be hoped for were it exclusively confined to the works of one composer, even when that composer is as great as Handel.

These remarks are put forth in sincerest good faith, and with the earnest desire of establishing this Triennial Festival in the Metropolis, as firmly as those which have already existed so long in other parts of England. It is scarcely necessary, therefore, to say that, in the event of our suggestions not being acted upon, we should still wish all success to the undertaking. With every desire for reform, we would infinitely prefer the Handel Festival as it stands to no Festival at all; and convinced as we are of the incalculable good the Sacred Harmonic Society has already effected for music in this country, it is with confidence that we make any proposition to help forward the good work which this Institution has for many years so ably and successfully promoted.

### HER MAJESTY'S OPERA.

CHERUBINI'S *Medea* has been the principal opera produced during the past month. Madlle. Titiens, as before, sustaining the arduous character of *Medea* with a truthfulness which must attract all real artists to the house, although we fear the work never can become popular with the bulk of the subscribers. Signor Mongini, in the tenor part of *Jason*, has shown that he is fully capable of grappling with really classical music; and his success has been complete. Meyerbeer's *Huguenots*, with a powerful cast, has been highly attractive.

### ROYAL ITALIAN OPERA.

On the 16th ult., Meyerbeer's opera, *L'Africaine*, was produced for the first time this season; but we doubt whether even the admirable singing of Madlle. Lucca and Signor Graziani will keep this dreary work upon the stage. Donizetti's *La Figlia del Reggimento* has been revived for Madlle. Adelina Patti; and this sparkling opera, with so exquisite a heroine, is likely to prove one of the most genuine successes of the season. Meyerbeer's *Huguenots* has also been given; but neither principal tenor nor principal soprano are really equal to the music.

### MR. JOSEPH BARNBY'S CHOIR.

THE concluding Concert of the series for the present season, which took place on the 3rd ult., contained a very excellent selection of madrigals and part-songs, all of which were sung with such extreme delicacy and precision as to elicit more than the usual average of encores. These were awarded to the very excellent part-song by Miss Agnes Zimmermann, "To Daffodils," to Mr. G. A. Macfarren's part-songs "The Sands o' Dee," and the "Three Fishers," and to Mr. Joseph Barnby's characteristic part-song, "The Skylark." J. S. Bach's Motett, "I wrestle and pray," had evidently been most carefully rehearsed; and although the enormous difficulty of the composition caused an occasional unsteadiness in parts, the general effect was extremely fine, the basses and sopranos, especially, attacking the points with astonishing power and decision. The principal madrigals were Beale's "Come, let us join the roundelay," Morley's "Shoot, false Love, I care not," Edwards' "In going to my lonesome bed," (one of the finest specimens of the compositions of the middle of the 16th century), and Wilbye's model madrigal "Sweet honey-sucking bees," the tone of the choir in the quaint harmonies of these little gems having an effect of fullness, even in the *piano* parts, too seldom heard with a large body of voices. Two part-songs, performed for the first time, were also included in the programme—one by Henry Smart, "'Tis break of day," and one by Walter Macfarren, "Summer," both of which were received with deserved applause. Madlle. Pauline Lucca and Mr. Sims Reeves were the solo vocalists; and in each of their songs they created the utmost enthusiasm. Madlle. Lucca gave Meyerbeer's "La fille du Pêcheur;" and on being encored, substituted "Voi che sapete," which scarcely reached our ideal of the true interpretation of this beautiful air.